

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

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Special Court Prosecutor Says He Will Not Prosecute Children

The Prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone David Crane told Sierra Leonean students on Friday that he does not intend to indict any children. His mandate is to prosecute individuals who bear greatest responsibility for war crimes committed during the country's conflict. According to the statute of the Court, this could include anyone over the age of fifteen.



Speaking at a local secondary school in the town of Kabala, near the Guinean border, Crane said, "The children of Sierra Leone have suffered enough both as victims and perpetrators. I am not interested in prosecuting children. I want to prosecute the people who forced thousands of children to commit unspeakable crimes," he said. Many of the students at the school had been child soldiers.

Crane told them that he plans to establish "crimes against children" as war crimes. Child abduction and forced recruitment are crimes in the Court's statute that have never been prosecuted before by an international tribunal.

Later in the afternoon, Crane met with leaders of civil society, local chiefs, former combatants, and residents of Kabala at their town hall.

The Prosecutor said that it was important for him to travel outside of Freetown to "meet and hear from his clients: the people of Sierra Leone." He and his staff have begun holding community meetings in various parts of the country since August to solicit views on how to undertake the mandate of prosecuting those who bear the greatest responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law. So far they have travelled to over half the country's districts.

The Court's Registrar Robin Vincent has also started a series of visits around the country. He was in Kenema last Tuesday raising awareness about other branches of the Court, including the defense and the judges. #END

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